Position Logic

The Mechanism Beneath the Volumes: How Every Pattern This Project Has Traced Reduces to Human Beings in Positions, Deciding with the Materials at Hand; How Benefit Is Indexed to What Formation Taught the Actor to Value, and Cost Counts Only Where It Is Credibly Enforced; How Similar Positions Converge on a Path Without Ever Becoming a Conscious Class, and Institutions Select Their Members Until the Position Thinks for Itself; and the Discipline That Keeps the Instrument Tested, Not Revealed

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with Claude (Anthropic)

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POSITION LOGIC

Preface

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This paper is unlike the volumes it stands among: it is not a case study and not a framework for one, but the statement of the method that has been running beneath all of them — used on every page of this project and, until now, written on none. When the Russian volume derived Stalin's conduct from nothing but the assumption that he wished to keep his position; when it read the commandment against idols as a leader's situated answer to a faction's golden calf; when the study of the Western settlement showed elites conceding because a credible rival had repriced refusal; when the Césaire volume treated one man's refusal of his position's logic as a finding demanding explanation — each was the same instrument at work. The instrument was supplied by the project's author, in dialogue, under the name this paper carries: position logic.

The mechanism is short enough for a sentence: a human being occupies a position in a structure, the position presents a menu of actions and a set of circumstances simply there in front of him, and he decides with the materials at hand, weighing benefit against cost. No laws of history, no economic forces acting over anyone's head, no class consciousness descending on a million minds — only people, in positions, deciding. Two caveats make it an instrument rather than a slogan. Benefit is indexed to what the actor values, and values are supplied by formation — which is how the method prices the believer and the martyr without calling them irrational, and how the project's two halves join: formation supplies the values, position prices the actions, the human being chooses. And cost counts only where credibly enforced — which is the plurality finding restated as arithmetic, a counterweight being nothing other than institutionalised credible cost.

From these the paper builds the rest: how people in similar positions converge on a path — watching one another, copying what visibly works — until from outside they are indistinguishable from a conscious class acting in concert, though no collective mind exists; how institutions select their members, filtering generation by generation, until the position's logic lives in the staffing itself and is thought by no one; and the discipline that keeps the instrument honest — values read only from evidence prior to the conduct they explain, deviations honoured as findings, and the statement, in advance, of what would defeat the method itself. The findings of this project can be argued with volume by volume. This paper writes down the way of seeing, so that it too can be argued with — which is the only kind of inheritance the project trusts.

A Note on This Collaboration

The theory stated in this paper, and its name, are Thomas J. Bryan's. He offered it in dialogue with a characteristic disclaimer — that nothing he does is concrete theory, only things he sees, patterns extrapolated out — and with its two caveats already attached: that one must know what a person values before knowing what benefits them, and that cost matters only under accountability

or the credible threat of it. He likewise supplied the convergence account — that what looks like a conscious class is people in similar positions finding examples that work and converging on a path, without ever becoming conscious as a class. The articulation, the placement of the method against the scholarship of collective action and analytical Marxism, the selection mechanism, and the stress-testing — above all the discipline against imputing values after the outcome — are Claude's (Anthropic), developed in the same dialogue. The paper's closing judgement is jointly held: that the author's disclaimer describes not the absence of a theory but the tested posture itself, which is the only kind of theory the project's coda permits anyone.

The Argument in Five Parts

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I. The Mechanism, Stated Plainly

A human being occupies a position in a structure; the position presents a menu of actions, a set of prices, and the materials at hand; and he decides, weighing benefit against cost. No mystical forces — the great patterns are what such decisions sum to when positions are similar. Structure matters, but it enters through the position, never as a force acting in place of the person; and the method's first virtue is that it imputes one psychology to everyone — Tsar, commissar, believer, Conservative — differences in conduct flowing from positions and values, not from kinds of people.

II. The Two Caveats That Make It an Instrument

Benefit is indexed to what the actor values, and formation supplies the values — which prices the believer and the martyr coherently, repairs the helplessness of crude economism, and joins the project's two halves: formation supplies the values, position prices the actions, the human being chooses. And cost counts only where credibly enforced — a counterweight is institutionalised credible cost, foreclosure is the apex's calculus with an empty cost column, and the Counterweight volume demonstrated the caveat at the scale of a century: the dial turned with credibility, not existence. The corollary is the cage: the followers' values fill the leader's cost column whether or not he shares them, which is why the cynic and the true believer converge at the apex.

III. Convergence Without Consciousness

The conscious class was invented to explain a real observation — concerted action without central direction — but the free-rider problem hollows it: a collective mind names the mystery rather than solving it. The simpler account: similar positions present similar calculi; actors watch others in their position, copy what visibly works, and converge — and convergence, seen from outside, is indistinguishable from coordination. The revolutionaries of the propagation series and the elites of 1919 are the same mechanism on opposite sides of the barricade. The corollary disciplines the conspiratorial style: most elite coordination is elite convergence, which cannot be unmasked — only repriced.

IV. Selection: How Positions Think Without Thinkers

Institutions need no conscious calculators because they filter: hiring, promoting, and shedding until the people who remain embody what the position rewards, and the logic lives in the staffing itself, executed by no one and obeyed by everyone. Selection explains the founder outlived by his creature, the ossification nobody chose, the good man inside the captured institution whom the filter gently extrudes — and the cynical operator who need not corrupt anyone, only seize the filter and wait. Three layers complete the method: individual calculus, cohort convergence, institutional selection — ordinary processes whose joint product is the durable pattern the lazy eye calls history's laws and the paranoid eye calls the hidden hand.

V. The Discipline

The operating procedure in six steps, with its law: values are read only from evidence prior to the conduct they explain — formation, record, documented incentives — and deviation is honoured as a

finding, either a misread value or a person paying the position’s price for commitments it did not supply, as the project’s poet did. The danger is the values term as universal solvent: imputed after the outcome, it explains everything, forbids nothing, and turns the instrument into astrology with a materialist accent. The method’s company — the collective-action, micromotives, and analytical-Marxist literatures — reached neighbouring ground, but took values as given and material, helpless before the believer; the formation-fed values term is this project’s own. The paper ends by stating what would defeat the method, in advance — because saying so in advance is the whole difference between a tool and a creed.

PART I

THE MECHANISM, STATED PLAINLY

How a method that has been running silently beneath every volume of this project is here extracted from its cases and written down; what the mechanism is — a human being in a position, choosing among the actions the position makes available, with the materials at hand, weighing benefit against cost; and why its first virtue is that it imputes one and the same psychology to the Tsar, the commissar, the believer, and the Conservative voting for the welfare state

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I. A Theory Extracted From Its Own Cases

Every body of work has a way of seeing that is older than its findings, and this paper exists because the project's way of seeing has until now lived only inside its cases — used on every page and stated on none. When the Russian volume set aside the question of Stalin's soul and derived his conduct from nothing but the assumption that he wished to keep his position, it was using this method. When the same volume read the commandment against idols as a leader's situated answer to a faction's golden calf, it was using this method. When the study of the Western settlement showed elites conceding the welfare state because a credible rival had repriced refusal, it was using this method — and when the Césaire volume treated one man's refusal to follow his position's logic as a finding that demanded explanation rather than an embarrassment to be smoothed over, it was using the method's discipline. The framework was supplied, in dialogue, by the project's author, who offered it with a characteristic disclaimer — that nothing he does is concrete theory, only patterns seen and extrapolated — and who gave it the name this paper carries: position logic. The disclaimer, the paper will argue at its close, describes not the absence of a theory but precisely the posture the project's coda demands of every theory; and the name is exact. What follows is the mechanism, its two governing caveats, the account it gives of collective action without collective minds, the account it gives of institutions without conspirators, and the discipline that keeps the whole instrument from curdling into the one thing this project exists to refuse — a revealed doctrine that explains everything and forbids nothing.

II. The Mechanism

The mechanism is short enough to state in a sentence and the rest of the paper is the unpacking of it. A human being occupies a position within a structure; the position presents a menu of available actions and a set of circumstances that are simply there, in front of him, not chosen; and he decides among the actions with the materials at hand, weighing what each will gain him against what each will cost him. That is all. There are no mystical forces in the mechanism — no laws of history grinding toward a destination, no economic necessities operating over the heads of the people who are supposed to embody them, no class consciousness descending on a million minds

at once. There are only people, in positions, deciding; and the great patterns the project has traced — the durable hierarchies, the concessions and the foreclosures, the revolutions that re-pour the master — are what those decisions sum to when the positions are similar and the circumstances are shared. Structure matters enormously in this account, but it matters in one specific way: it enters through the position, by setting the menu, the prices, and the materials, and never as a force that acts in place of the person. The Tsar did not freeze reform because History required autocracy to ossify; he froze it because, from where he sat, every channel of concession looked like the first step of his own dissolution, and the record of his reforming grandfather's assassination was among the materials at hand. Lenin did not build the vanguard because the dialectic demanded it; he built it because the workers in front of him were not becoming revolutionary and a disciplined cadre was the instrument his circumstances made available. The pattern is real. The force is not. The pattern is the sum of the decisions.

III. What a Position Is

A position, as the method uses the word, is a location in a structure of dependence — apex, minister, bishop, commissar, factory owner, union organiser, peasant, cadre — defined by three things: what the occupant can do from there (the menu), what the occupant is exposed to from there (the prices), and whom the occupant depends on and who depends on him (the relations that set both). The same human being moved between positions will decide differently, not because his character has changed but because the menu and the prices have; and different human beings moved into the same position will, far more often than the biographical style of history admits, decide alike — which is the observation from which the whole method grows. The project's volumes are a long demonstration of it. The instruments of survival the Bolsheviks built were the instruments any occupant of their position — a minority seizing a collapsing state amid civil war — would have reached for, which is why the volume on them analysed the position and not the men. Bismarck and the conservative architects of the postwar welfare states, separated by seventy years and a world war, converged on the same bargain because they occupied the same position: an elite facing a workers' movement whose demands were cheaper to meet than to fight. And the first virtue of reading history this way is moral as well as analytical: it imputes one psychology to everyone. No class is greedier than another, no era more cynical, no people more servile; there are only positions that price actions differently, and human beings — the same human beings everywhere — paying the prices in front of them. Where conduct differs, the method's first question is never what kind of person, but what kind of position; and only when the position cannot explain the conduct does the person, as the final part will show, become the finding.

PART II

THE TWO CAVEATS THAT MAKE IT AN INSTRUMENT

How the bare mechanism becomes a usable instrument only with its two governing caveats — that benefit is indexed to what the actor values, which formation supplies, and that cost counts only where it is credibly enforced; and how the two caveats bind the project's two inquiries into a single machine, with the belief-as-cage finding as the corollary that follows

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I. The Values Caveat: Formation Prices the Benefit

The first caveat is the one that separates this method from the crude economism it superficially resembles, and the author stated it as the theory's own condition: you must know what someone values before you can know what benefits them. Benefit is not an objective quantity lying in the world; it is indexed to the actor's values, and an action that profits one man ruins another who values differently. The crude materialist assumes the values are everywhere the same — money, safety, power — and is then helpless before the believer, the martyr, the man who walks into prison rather than recant; he must call such people irrational, which is to say, his theory must give up exactly where the twentieth century needed it most. The values caveat repairs this, and it repairs it with the central finding of the project's first inquiry. Values are supplied by formation: installed in the person, before he could weigh them, by the whole machinery of his upbringing — which is why the believer's calculus is not a failure of position logic but an instance of it. Given what the formed believer values — fidelity, salvation, the standing of his people before God, the cause — his choices are coherent, often rigorously so; the martyr is not refusing the calculus, he is running it with weights the observer forgot to check. And with this caveat in place, the project's two halves snap together into one machine, which is the deepest thing this paper has to say: formation supplies the values; position prices the actions; the human being chooses from the menu in front of him. The first inquiry studied the supply of values. The cases studied the pricing of actions. Position logic is the join.

II. The Credibility Caveat: Only Enforced Cost Is Cost

The second caveat is the author's as well, and it carries the entire political history this project has written: cost is only a factor if the actor is held accountable to it, or faces a real and credible threat that he will be. A cost that will never be collected is not a cost; it is a sentence in a pamphlet. The apex that extracts brutally from a population that cannot strike, cannot vote, cannot organise, and cannot rebel pays nothing for the extraction, whatever the moralist says it costs him — and so the dial of his position logic rests exactly where he likes it. Read with this caveat, the first inquiry's central finding restates itself as mechanism. A counterweight — the court the apex does not own,

the press he cannot silence, the union that can empty his factories, the electorate that can end his ministry — is nothing other than institutionalised credible cost: a standing capacity to collect, which enters the apex's calculus precisely because it is credible. Plurality is the condition in which the apex's position logic runs with a full cost column; foreclosure is the condition in which it runs with an empty one; and everything the project found about pressure released as reform versus pressure stored toward rupture follows from that single difference in the arithmetic. The Counterweight volume then demonstrated the caveat at the scale of a century, with a precision the method could hardly have hoped for: the Western elites' dial turned when October made revolution credible, held for as long as the credibility held, and began turning back in the late 1970s — a decade before the rival state fell — because the dial tracks credibility and not existence, exactly as the caveat requires. The threat that is no longer believed collects nothing, even while its armies still stand.

III. The Corollary of the Cage

One corollary follows from the two caveats jointly, and the project has already used it to read its hardest case, so it belongs in the statement of the method. The values that enter a leader's cost column are not only his own; they are his followers'. A ruler whose authority rests on his followers' belief faces, in their belief, a price list he did not write and cannot safely violate — for the moment they see him act against the faith for his own advantage, the belief that converts his commands into duties begins to drain, and a command that is no longer a duty must be purchased with force, which is the expensive way to rule. This is why the cynic and the true believer converge at the apex of a believing hierarchy: whatever is in the leader's heart, his position prices the same conduct for both — speak the liturgy, frame every move as service, convert rivals into heretics — because his followers' values fill his cost column whether or not he shares them. The Russian volume derived Stalin's whole architecture from nothing more than this: assume only that he wished to keep his position, observe that the belief system priced his options, and the show trials and the doctrine of the sharpening class struggle follow as the solutions his position made cheapest. The method did not need to open the man's heart, and that is the point of the method: where the structure binds tightly, the position determines the conduct, and the soul — genuinely double, finally unknowable — is the one variable the analysis can afford to leave closed.

PART III

CONVERGENCE WITHOUT CONSCIOUSNESS

How the appearance of classes acting in concert — the puzzle that the doctrine of class consciousness was invented to explain — dissolves into something simpler: people in similar positions facing similar calculi, watching one another, copying what visibly works, and converging on a path; how convergence seen from outside is indistinguishable from coordination; and what the difference does to the conspiratorial style of explanation

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I. The Hole in the Collective Mind

The doctrine of class consciousness was invented to explain a real observation: that large numbers of people in similar economic situations sometimes act, with no central direction, as if they were a single coordinated body — owners closing ranks against a strike across a whole industry, workers downing tools across a whole country, elites conceding in a dozen parliaments in the same eighteen months. The observation is genuine and demands explanation. But the explanation the doctrine offers — that the class, at a certain stage, becomes conscious of itself and begins to act as a collective subject — has a hole in its centre that its own tradition eventually noticed, and that the scholarship of collective action made formal: the free-rider problem. If the gains of class action flow to every member whether or not he bears its costs, then each individual owner, and each individual worker, does best by letting the others bear them — and a collective mind does not answer this; it merely names the mystery and moves on. Why would this factory owner risk his firm for his class? Why would this worker risk his job, his bones, his family's bread, for a victory he will share equally if he stays home? Until those questions are answered at the level of the individual in his position, the conscious class is not an explanation but a restatement of the thing to be explained — a mystical force wearing a sociological name.

II. Convergence: The Simpler Account

The author's account requires no mystery, and the paper states it as he stated it: it starts with position logic, and then people look for examples that work, or watch others in similar positions, and they converge on a path of action — without ever becoming conscious as a class. Unpack that and the mechanism has three ordinary steps. First, similar positions present similar calculi: every mill owner in Lancashire faces the same union, the same prices, the same menu; every minister in 1919 faces the same demobilised armies and the same news from Petrograd. Second, actors in similar positions watch one another, because the conduct of a man in your position is the cheapest information in the world about what your own position will reward — and so the successful move propagates, copied not out of solidarity but out of the same calculus that produced it the first time.

Third, the copying converges: within a season or a decade, the whole cohort is walking the path that worked, and from the outside — and this is the crux — convergence is indistinguishable from coordination. It looks like a class acting in concert. It is a thousand separate calculations reaching the same answer because they were given the same inputs, plus the observed results of each other's trials. The project's own volumes supply the demonstrations from both sides of the barricade. The revolutionaries of the propagation series converged on the Leninist template not because a directing intelligence assigned it but because it was the one example that had visibly worked, adopted by men in similar positions reasoning identically from the same record. And the elites of 1919 converged on concession in exactly the manner the quantitative study describes — reading the signals of revolution abroad as information about their own positions, and reforming, country by country, in proportion to the threat each faced. Two hostile cohorts, one mechanism, no collective minds anywhere.

III. Conspiracy and Convergence

The same dissolution disciplines the opposite error, and the project will need the discipline more, not less, as the second inquiry advances into the politics of the present. The conspiratorial style of explanation — the belief that the pattern proves a plot, that the elites who move together must have met — makes the same mistake as the doctrine of class consciousness, in a paranoid key: it sees convergence and infers coordination, because it cannot imagine the pattern arising without a author. Position logic can. Most of what looks like elite coordination is elite convergence: a hundred boards, a hundred ministries, a hundred newsrooms, each running the same calculus on the same inputs and arriving at the same answer, with no meeting required — which is why the pattern survives every exposure, every leak, every change of personnel, to the endless bafflement of those who keep expecting the unmasking to break it. And the difference is not academic; it dictates the remedy. A conspiracy can be exposed and decapitated: find the meeting, name the plotters, and the coordination dies with them. A convergence cannot be unmasked, because there is nothing hidden; it can only be repriced — the inputs changed, the cost columns refilled, the payoffs of the convergent path made worse than the payoffs of another — which is slower, less satisfying, and the only thing that works. The first inquiry's whole prescription, the tending of counterweights, is repricing; the Counterweight volume's whole story is a repricing and its reversal. The romantic imagination prefers the plot, for the same reason it prefers the storming of the palace: it offers an author to punish and a single night's work. The method offers neither, and is true.

PART IV

SELECTION: HOW POSITIONS THINK WITHOUT THINKERS

How institutions enforce their positions' logic without requiring a single conscious calculator, by filtering — promoting and retaining the conduct that fits, shedding the conduct that does not — until the logic lives in the staffing process itself and survives every individual who passes through; and how this explains the facts the project kept meeting: the founder outlived by his creature, the ossification nobody chose, and the good man inside the captured institution

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I. The Filter

There is one more mechanism, and with it the method is complete, because it answers the objection the first three parts leave standing: that real people inside real institutions do not feel themselves to be calculating anything — they feel themselves to be doing their jobs, following the norms, being sound. The answer is that an institution does not need its members to run the position's logic consciously, because the institution runs it for them, by selection. Every organisation filters continuously: it hires some applicants and not others, promotes some members and not others, listens to some voices and tires of others, and quietly sheds the people whose conduct does not fit what the institution's position rewards. The members need intend none of this; each individual decision is local, defensible, about this candidate and that promotion. But the sum of the filtering is that, over time, the people who remain and rise are the people whose instincts happen to match what the position requires — who did not need to calculate the institution's interest because they were selected for embodying it unreflectively. The position's logic comes to live in the staffing process itself, executed by no one and obeyed by everyone, and the institution behaves like a calculating actor while containing not a single member who is consciously calculating. This is how positions think without thinkers; and it is why the project's volumes could treat institutions — the Church, the party, the regulator, the press — as actors with logics, without ever committing the mystic's error of believing an institution has a mind.

II. What Selection Explains

Set the filter beside the facts the project kept meeting, and one after another they stop being puzzles. The founder outlived by his creature: Lenin's party enforcing, decades after his death, a logic he improvised for 1902 — because the party's filters went on selecting for the cadre temperament long after the man and his circumstances were gone, so that the position's logic survived its author the way a riverbed survives the flood that cut it. The ossification nobody chose: the coda observed that counterweights drift from checking power toward serving it, and selection is the drift's engine — the regulator staffed, appointment by defensible appointment,

with people from the industry, until the institution's instincts are the industry's, with no decision anywhere that anyone could point to as the betrayal. The good man inside the captured institution, who is genuinely good and changes nothing: he was admitted because he fit, he rises while he fits, and the day his conscience exceeds the position's tolerances, the filter that admitted him begins, gently and without malice, to extrude him — which is why staffing a captured institution with better people fails, and why the cynical operator of the coda's warning does not need to corrupt the trusted institution's members at all. He needs only to take the filter — the appointments, the hiring, the promotion criteria — and then wait, while selection breeds him the institution he wants out of perfectly sincere material. No villains are required for any of this; and where villains appear, their work is mostly to seize filters that ordinary entropy had already built.

III. The Three Layers

The method is now whole, and it has three layers, which the volumes have been using in combination all along. At the bottom, the individual: a formed human being in a position, choosing from the menu with the materials at hand, his benefits weighted by what formation taught him to value, his costs real only where credibly enforced. Above him, the cohort: the others in similar positions, watching one another, copying what works, converging on paths that look — from outside — like the concerted action of a conscious class, and are not. And above them both, the institution: filtering its membership, generation by generation, until the position's logic is embodied in the personnel and no longer needs to be thought by anyone. Individual calculus, cohort convergence, institutional selection — three ordinary processes, each observable, each requiring no force more mystical than people deciding and organisations hiring; and their joint product is the durable, self-reproducing, person-independent pattern that the lazy eye attributes to the laws of history and the paranoid eye to the hidden hand. The project's claim, demonstrated now across ten volumes, is that the three layers are sufficient: that the Tsardom and the vanguard, the welfare settlement and its repossession, the conduit and the cage, every structure this series has anatomised, resolves without remainder into formed people, in positions, deciding — and that nothing is lost in the resolution except the mysticism.

PART V

THE DISCIPLINE

How the instrument is to be used — the operating procedure the volumes have followed; the one danger that can turn it into a revealed doctrine, which is the imputing of values after the outcome; the company the method keeps in the scholarship, and where it is more complete; what it is not; and the statement, applied to position logic itself, of what evidence would defeat it

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I. The Operating Procedure

Stated as practice, for whoever takes up the project's work next, the method runs in six steps, and the volumes are its worked examples. First, identify the position: the location in the structure, its menu of available actions, its dependence relations. Second, establish what the occupant values — and establish it only from evidence that exists prior to the conduct you mean to explain: the documented formation, the record of earlier choices, the rewards and penalties of the occupant's community and institution. Third, fill in the cost column: what accountability is credibly enforced on this position, by whom, with what probability — remembering that unenforced cost is not cost. Fourth, derive what the position requires: given those values and those prices, which available action is cheapest, and what conduct should follow. Fifth, check the derivation against the record of what the occupant actually did. And sixth — the step that gives the method its honesty — treat deviation as a finding, never as noise to be explained away. When conduct departs from the position's logic, one of two true things has been discovered: either the values were misread, in which case return to the prior record and look again; or the occupant genuinely paid the position's price for the sake of commitments the position did not supply — which is rare, and precious, and exactly what the project found in the one man who reasoned his way out of the conduit while his whole cohort converged the other way. His deviation was explained by commitments visible in his record years before the break; it was predicted by his formation, not retrofitted to his choice. The procedure's two showpieces, then: Stalin, derived from the position and a single assumption, with the soul left closed; and Césaire, the deviation honoured as a finding, with the explanation drawn from evidence that predated the deed. Between them they mark the method's range — what it can do without biography, and where biography becomes the data.

II. The Solvent Danger

The method has one failure mode, and it must be named in the methods statement itself because it is the door through which a tested instrument becomes a revealed doctrine. The values term is the danger. Because benefit is indexed to values, any conduct whatsoever can be made consistent with position logic by imputing, after the fact, whatever values would rationalise it — he conceded because he valued stability, he refused because he valued honour, he reversed because

he valued legacy — and a theory operated this way explains everything, forbids nothing, and has quietly become unfalsifiable: astrology with a materialist accent. The discipline against it is the second step of the procedure taken as law: values are read only off evidence that exists before the outcome — the formation, the prior record, the institution's documented incentives — and the position logic is then required to predict, with the prediction exposed to the record. Where the prior evidence will not support any values that make the conduct cheap, the method must say so and register an anomaly, rather than inventing a value to close the gap; the anomalies are where the learning is, and a method that never meets one is no longer investigating. This is the tested-not-revealed posture of the project's coda, applied to the project's own engine — and it is worth noticing that the temptation it guards against is the very one the first inquiry anatomised in the doctrine it studied: the conversion of a falsifiable claim into a scheme that reads every outcome as confirmation. Marxism's determinism failed as science exactly there. Position logic earns the right to replace it only by refusing the same comfort.

III. The Company It Keeps

The author arrived at this method by his own road — patterns seen and extrapolated, in his phrase — and the paper records, for honesty and for the reader's further travel, that a body of scholarship reached neighbouring ground after a long detour, which is corroboration rather than precedence. The free-rider problem that hollows the collective mind was formalised in the study of collective action in the 1960s; the demonstration that individually sensible choices aggregate into large patterns that look designed from above — convergence without coordination — was given its classic form in the micromotives literature of the 1970s; and in the 1980s a school of scholars, working inside the Marxist tradition itself and dissatisfied with its mysticisms, undertook to reconstruct it on exactly this ground: keep the structural positions, drop the collective subject, and require every claim that a class acts to be cashed out in the incentives of individuals in positions, free-rider problems and all. The reconstruction was carried far, and the project stands nearer to that school than to any other. But the method stated here is more complete than its rational-choice relatives in one respect that the whole project turns on: those schools largely took values as given and material, which left them as helpless before the believer as the crude economism they refined — and the values caveat, fed by the first inquiry's account of formation, covers precisely the case they could not. A method for the twentieth century had to be able to price the conduct of the martyr, the cadre, and the saint without calling them irrational. This one can, because it lets formation set the weights; and that join — formation supplying the values that position logic then prices — the project believes to be its own.

IV. Tested, Not Revealed — Applied to Itself

Last, the method's scope and its own exposure, because a methods statement that exempts itself from its standards has already failed them. What position logic is not: it is not a claim that people are conscious calculators — the layers of convergence and selection exist precisely because most of the logic is run by imitation and staffing rather than by arithmetic in anyone's head. It is not economism — the values caveat is the repudiation of that. It is not a denial of sincerity, idealism,

or love; it brackets the soul not because the soul is unreal but because, where structures bind tightly, the position determines the conduct and the soul cannot be read off it — and where structures bind loosely, in the slack, biography rules, which is why the method's writ is strongest at constrained apexes and weakest in the lives of poets, and why the project's great counter-case was a poet. And what would defeat it: systematic conduct, at constrained positions, that no values documentable in the prior record can make cheap; deviations that correlate with nothing in the actors' formations; cohorts in identical positions persistently failing to converge; institutions whose behaviour floats free of their filters. Find these, in volume, and the instrument is broken and must be revised or retired — the paper says so in advance, because saying so in advance is the whole difference between a tool and a creed. The author offered all of this as not concrete theory, merely patterns extrapolated and held open; the paper's last word is that this description, far from diminishing the work, is the only honest description of any theory the coda permits anyone to hold. Patterns seen, mechanisms proposed, predictions exposed, anomalies honoured, revisions accepted: that is what tested means. The findings of this project may be argued with volume by volume. The way of seeing is here written down, so that it too can be argued with — which is the only kind of inheritance this project trusts.

A Note on Sources

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A methods statement's evidence is its worked examples, and this paper's live in the project's own volumes; the scholarly company it keeps is recorded for the reader's further travel.

The demonstrations. The derivation of Stalin's architecture from his position alone, and the reading of the commandment against idols as a leader's situated solution, in *The Foreclosed Republic*; the convergence of revolutionaries on the template that had visibly worked in *The Error They Carried Home*; the credibility dial at the scale of a century in *The Counterweight Nobody Built*; the deviation case — the man who paid his position's price for commitments visible in his record years before the break — in *The People He Would Not Let Vanish*; and the ossification of counterweights, here re-grounded in selection, in the coda *What Is to Be Done*.

The collective-action problem. Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action* (1965), the formalisation of the free-rider problem that hollows every collective-mind explanation; and Thomas Schelling, *Micromotives and Macrobehavior* (1978), the classic demonstration that individually sensible choices aggregate into patterns that look designed from above.

The neighbouring school. The analytical-Marxist reconstruction of the 1980s — Jon Elster, *Making Sense of Marx* (1985), with the work of G. A. Cohen and John Roemer — which kept the structural positions, dropped the collective subject, and required claims of class action to be cashed out in the incentives of individuals; the paper records where the present method follows that school and where, in the formation-fed values term, it goes beyond it.

The convergence evidence. Magnus B. Rasmussen and Carl Henrik Knutsen, *Reforming to Survive* (Cambridge), on the elites of 1919 reading revolutionary signals as information about their own positions; and Herbert Obinger and Carina Schmitt, "Guns and Butter?", *World Politics* 63 (2011), on the mirrored convergence of social policy on both sides of the Iron Curtain.